

# NEW ACQUISITION POLICY STRESSES SPEED, CREDIBILITY

**W**ASHINGTON (AFPN)—Speed and credibility are enshrined as top priorities for all acquisition programs, according to a new policy the Air Force's senior acquisition official approved June 4.

"The two overarching objectives of this policy are to shorten the acquisition cycle time and to gain credibility within and outside the acquisition community," wrote Dr. Marvin Sambur, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition. "Every action and decision by individuals responsible for program execution must map directly to, and further these two primary objectives."

Warfighters are demanding faster delivery of new capabilities to meet unexpected and unpredictable threats, Sambur said. At the same time, Air Force leaders, Congress, and others are insisting that Air Force acquisition programs deliver what they promised, on time and on budget. The new policy lays the foundation for meeting both requirements, he said.

The new policy, developed jointly by Air Force acquisition headquarters and Air Force Materiel Command [AFMC] officials, is one of the cornerstones of the Air Force's Agile Acquisition effort launched in late 2001.

It marks a new philosophy in regulating Air Force acquisition, according to Air Force officials. Unlike the 1993 policy it replaces, which was highly prescriptive, the new one challenges managers to find better ways to do their business without telling them, step-by-step, exactly how.

"This is a huge step toward freeing our managers to manage," said Gen. Lester Lyles, Commander of AFMC. "We are going to get out of the checklist mentality and eliminate from our processes all the steps that add time but are of little value."

The new policy memorandum, which will be followed soon by a formal, permanent policy directive, makes clear that all acquisition programs must

continue to conform to federal law and Defense Department regulations. But it also directs program managers and others to find the best way for their programs to meet those requirements.

"One size does not fit all," said Lyles.

"All activities, reports, plans, coordination, or reviews except those mandated by statute or previously approved by a person in the execution chain, must buy their way into the program. The benefit gained must clearly equal or outweigh the resources expended," the memorandum states.

The memorandum also established collaborative spiral development as the preferred way to acquire systems.

Sambur said too many programs get into trouble because they try to deliver everything the warfighter wants all at once.

"These programs are very complex and we have to stop trying to 'eat the elephant' in one bite," Sambur said. "If we work with our partners—the warfighters, testers, technologists, budgeters, and logisticians—and develop these in systems increments, we'll break these complex programs into manageable 'bites.' That will allow us to deliver capability more quickly and give us a much better chance of meeting our cost and schedule goals."

The new policy also underscores the importance of strong systems engineering up-front in every program, particularly in the first spiral.

"Systems engineering lays the foundation for success," Sambur said. "When you look at programs that get in trouble, you usually find weaknesses in systems engineering at the outset. This new policy makes clear that we're going to attack that."

**Editor's Note:** This information, courtesy of AFMC News Service, June 7, 2002, is in the public domain at <http://www.af.mil/news>.